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ABSTRACT

This topical bibliography and commentary discusses resource aids that help educators evaluate and select high quality reading materials for young adults. It discusses general resource articles as aids. Examples are: specific themes, booklists, and school system aids. It concludes that there are no succinct lists of criteria or resources; rather, educators must consult numerous sources, some of which are cited in this topical bibliography and commentary, before making wise selections. Contains 26 references and links to 3 Internet resources. (RS)

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Research Summary

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Selecting Reading Materials for High School Students

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Introduction

This article discusses resources aids that help educators evaluate and select high quality reading materials for young adults. Although educators use multiple sources as they select and evaluate books for high school students, the criteria for choosing quality literature for this age group vary and generally are not as "neat and clean" as those for the elementary school readers. A careful examination of various book selection guides reveals several common threads, such as the importance of the development of higher order thinking and communication skills, selecting materials which reflect the multicultural nature of our society, and gender and/or racial issues. The topic of censorship versus academic freedom receives attention as well.

General Resource Articles as Aids

Perhaps, one place to start searching for answers is in an article by Abrahamson (1997), entitled *Collected Wisdom.* In this article, the author presents a list of annotated articles on young adult literature and reading habits among high school students. These articles span 8 decades, from 1912 to 1997, and they come from professional journals and state publications, among others.

Another source for answers can be found in an article by Anderson (1984), in which the author edited several articles that focus on the issues of choosing books for instruction and the constraints on those choices. Issues represented include censorship and the tradition and dilemma of Afro-American literature. In addition, related bibliographies of booklists and resources on censorship are provided.

Various scholars (Fuhler, 2002; Lott, 2001; Neal & Moore, 1992) suggest the use of children's picture books to supplement the study of literature in the secondary schools. These authors argue that picture books are appropriate for such a purpose because of the following reasons:

1. Themes of many picture books have universal value and appeal for all age levels.
2. Some of the best picture books may have been missed when students were younger or many have been published since that time.
3. Many issues raised demand a maturity level that young children do not possess.
4. The short format facilitates incorporating picture books into lessons.
5. Our visually oriented society has conditioned students to employ pictures as comprehension aids.

Specific Themes as Aids

In some instances, educators might need to address specific themes in materials. A 1997 article by Eileen Oliver supports the use of diverse or multicultural literature in the classroom. She says there "really isn't a central 'core,' a majority population, a main group of any sort... And when we talk about 'multiculturalizing' our curriculum, we must understand that to do otherwise is to deprive our students of their rightful, diverse heritage." (49) She emphasizes that English

teachers can continue to teach reading, writing, speaking, and listening, but they can do so through the "voices of our culturally rich heritage." (50) Oliver also provides aids for teachers who feel uncomfortable about teaching in this new way.

Elise Ann Earthman addresses multiculturalism through classical mythology as it appears in modern culture. She gives an annotated list of contemporary works of fiction, poetry, and drama using mythological sources which would be useful and interesting to use in contemporary secondary classrooms.

Booklists as Aids

The International Reading Association and its Literature for Adolescents Committee oversee the compilation of "Young Adults' Choices" for 1993-1995. These annotated lists present trade books, published two years prior to the lists' presentation, which were selected by students themselves. Each book had to have at least two positive reviews from recognized sources before being submitted for student appraisal. From the over 5,000 ballots received, a final list of 30 books was created. An earlier list from this organization presents over 100 young adults' choices for the period 1987-1992.

The National Council of Teachers of English Committee on the Middle School and Junior High Booklist produces *Your Reading* which is an annotated booklist for students' use. The goal is to help students "feel, hear, and see through the power of books." (14) Over 100 titles of fiction and nonfiction published between 1993 and 1994 and selected by teachers and librarians are included in the edition cited in this paper.

Two lists in the *English Journal* present "Abridgements and Retellings of Classics" and "Favorite Booklists, Book Catalogs, and Book Review Sources." The classics list published in 1988 presents recommended retellings of classic stories because these "stories surpass any particular linguistic form and speak directly to the human psyche." (72)

The other resource provides annotated resources for teachers as they help students search for books. The editor says that "not only do the...sources help us find new books to check into, but also in the searching we are modeling for the student how to find book suggestions when the idea well seems dry." (97)

Alleen Pace Nilsen and Ken Donelson develop an honor list of books based on an examination of other people's "best book" lists. In addition, the authors consult librarians and teachers and other sources of recommendations before making their selections. They feel that their list of seven books offers "the best books published during 1991 for young adults." (88)

Richard Abrahamson presents "A Retrospective Look at Young Adult Literature of the 1980s." His list is of favorites from other authors as well as himself. Abrahamson does note that inadequate attention is given to nonfiction even though one study found that about "50% of the books checked out of junior high school libraries are nonfiction titles." (13) So, he offers a list of nonfiction books as well as fiction in his list.

School System Aids

School systems at all levels from local to state have produced lists of resources to aid teachers. Two dated documents from North Carolina offer lists of instructional media for languages and annotated bibliographies for language arts teachers from elementary through secondary school.

Neither list offers criteria for selections. However, a 1988 document for state-adopted basic *textbooks* for grammar/composition, writing, and world literature for grades 9-12 does offer criteria. Communication skills and thinking processes are emphasized. In addition, the materials should be multicultural and free of gender, racial, and cultural bias. The detailed evaluative criteria used to select textbooks and annotations of the selections are included in this document.

A California document on model curriculum standards for grades 9-12 in English/language arts emphasizes the importance of reading and higher order thinking skills. Selected materials should meet the following standards:

> Students study the central works to develop ethical. aesthetic, and cultural values. The student confronts the major social and political issues, thus acquiring a common body of knowledge embedded in literature. (E3-4)

The discussion of standards is followed by an appendix of recommended readings in literature.

Guidelines for instructional materials selection in the state of Washington specifically do not address young adult language arts. The general concerns are with academic freedom, bias-free materials, and legal obligations. General guidelines for instructional materials selection for Florida are general as well. Materials should "arouse curiosity and interest, should stimulate thinking, should promote the exercise of independent judgment, should furnish reliable and accurate basic information, and should be appropriate for use in conjunction with other instructional materials pertinent to the curriculum area being studied." (1)

The Zenke paper presented at a national meeting in 1981 summarizes the Tulsa, Oklahoma Board of Education book selection policy. The main concerns focus on academic freedom, responsibilities of educators, schools, students, and parents, and sensitivity to the "mores of its community in selecting materials for use in the schools." (5)

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, both the specific documents for language arts and literature for young adults and the more general ones share common themes. There are no succinct lists of criteria or resources; rather, the educator must consult numerous sources, some of which are cited in this document, before making wise selections.

Internet Resources

Focus on Young Adult Literature
http://www.readingonline.org/electronic/elec_index.asp?HREF=watch/index.html

Young Adult Literature: Middle & Secondary English-Language Arts
http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/yalit.htm

Vandergrift's Young Adult Literature Page
http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/YoungAdult/

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Abrahamson, R.F. (1997). Collected wisdom: The best articles ever written on young adult literature and teen reading. *English Journal, 86*(3), 50-54. [EJ540642]

Abridgements and retellings of classics (Booksearch).(1988). *English Journal, 77*(8), 72-74. [EJ381715]

Advisory list of instructional media: Fiction (1983). North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh. 9 pages. [ED244268]

Advisory list of instructional media for languages (1977). North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh. 62 pages. [ED149750]

Anderson, P.M., ed. (1984). Material selection/censorship. *The Leaflet, 83*(1), 52 pages. [ED259386]

Annotations: State-adopted basic textbooks for grammar/composition, grades 9-12; writing, grades 9-12; world literature, grade 10 (1988). North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of Communication Skills, Raleigh. 32 pages. [ED302847]

Criteria for instructional materials selection. 1975 Adoption (1975). Florida State Department of Education, Tallahassee. 19 pages. [ED101753]

Earthman, E.A. (1997). The siren song that keeps us coming back: Multicultural resources for teaching classical mythology. *English Journal, 86*(6), 76-81. [EJ556691]

Favorite booklists, book catalogues, and book review sources (Booksearch). (1991). *English Journal, 80*(6), 97-99. [EJ432535]

Fuhler, C. (2002). Picture Books for Older Readers: Passports for Teaching and Learning across the Curriculum. In J. B. Elliott & M. M. Dupuis (Eds.). *Young Adult Literature in the Classroom: Reading It, Teaching It, Loving It*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. [ED461833]

Kaiser, M. M. (1979). The meaning of work in literature popular with sixteen and seventeen-year olds. Presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Nov. 22-24. 16 pages.

Lott, C. (2001). Picture Books in the High School English Classroom. In B. Erickson (Ed.). *Teaching Reading in High School English Classes* (pp. 170-193). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. [ED458526]

Model curriculum standards, grades nine through twelve: English/language arts (1985). California State Department of Education, Sacramento. 97 pages. [ED181465]

Motomatsu, N., ed. (1980). Guidelines for the development of instructional materials selection policies, Handbook I. Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia. 81 pages. [ED201696]

Neal, J.C. and K. Moore (1992). "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" meets "Beowulf" in secondary classrooms. *Journal of Reading, 35*(4), 290-96. [EJ435527]

Nilsen, A.P. and K. Donelson (1992). Honor listing update, 1991: A lucky seven. (Books for the Teenage Reader). *English Journal, 81*(7), 88-92. [EJ452680]

Oliver, E.I. (1997). The power of the word: centrality of diverse literature in the American canon. *ALAN-Review, 24*(3), 48-50. [EJ555282]

Samuels, B.G. and K.G. Beers, eds. (1996). Your reading: An annotated booklist for middle school and junior high, 1995-96 edition. National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL. 386 pages. [ED387826]

Scannell, W.J., ed. (1970). English curriculum guides K-12 and criteria for planning and evaluation. National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, IL. 35 pages. [ED044419]

Teens' favorite books: Young adults' choices, 1987-1992. (1992). International Reading Association, Newark, DE. 85 pages. [ED351667]

Watt, L.B. and D. Goetz with C. Stanley (1969). Books related to English language and literature in elementary and secondary schools: A bibliography form the Educational Materials Center. Educational Materials Center, Washington, DC. 28 pages. [ED039236]

Young adults' choices for 1995 (1995). *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 39*(3), 225-31. [EJ515891]

Young adults' choices for 1994 (1994). *Journal of Reading, 38*(3), 219-25. [EJ492749]

Young adults' choices for 1993 (1993). *Journal of Reading, 37*(3), 221-28. [EJ472375]

Zenke, L.L. (1981). School book selection: Procedures, challenges and responses. Presented at the 71st annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English, Nov. 20-25. 7 pages. [ED213022]

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